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## WHAT DOES MARRIAGE MEAN TO EACH GENDER OF THE IL-CHAMUS? — HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP OF AN EAST AFRICAN AGRO-PASTORAL PEOPLE

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**ABSTRACT** The husband-wife relationship of the Il-Chamus, an agro-pastoral people living in northern Kenya, is analyzed from socio-economical and behavioral viewpoints. Described are: (1) acquisition and inheritance of property, division of labor, and wives' separation from their husbands in polygynous families; and (2) the husband's control of the wife's behavior, adultery, and legitimacy of children. By marriage, Il-Chamus husbands get wives' labor, which is indispensable for daily chores. By co-residence, they try to prevent wives from committing adultery, which endangers children's legitimacy. By marriage, wives get property, i.e. livestock and farms, to subsist on. It is not always necessary for them to co-reside with their husbands.

**Key Words:** Il-Chamus; Northern Kenya; Agro-pastoralist; Marriage system; Social structure; Husband; Wife.

### INTRODUCTION

Many social anthropologists focused on the function of marriage in the social and kinship structures. Some have considered the marriage as a system to integrate different groups (e.g., Keesing, 1976; Leach, 1961, 1982; Evans-Pritchard, 1951). They also have pointed out that marriage regulates the legitimate child as the members of the kinship group and that marriage transfer the wife (or husband) from her (his) natal group to that of the partner.

However, marriage has another aspect. It controls and rules daily relationship between the married pair. Although marriage unites man and woman as partners, the worth (merit) of such relationship may be different for each gender.

Investigating the residential group compositions of the Il-Chamus, an East African agro-pastoral people, I found a particular residential process in polygynous families, in which the elder wives separate themselves from their husbands and reside in different homesteads. Furthermore, the wives independently manage their homestead in economic terms.

In this report, I aim to clarify the meanings of marriage for each gender of the Il-Chamus. I do this through a presentation of the residential process within their life history, daily activities, division of labor, and attitude to the partner. First, I describe acquisition and inheritance of property, division of labor, and wives' separation from their husbands in polygynous families. Second, I describe the husband's control of the wife's behavior, adultery, and legitimacy of children.

## THE IL-CHAMUS

### I. General Background

The agro-pastoral Il-Chamus, numbering approximately 6,500 persons, live around Lake Baringo in the Great Rift Valley basin in northern Kenya (Fig. 1). Their language belongs to the Maa, one of the Eastern-Nilotic (Gregersen, 1977) as are the Maasai and the Samburu. They are considered to have originated from various

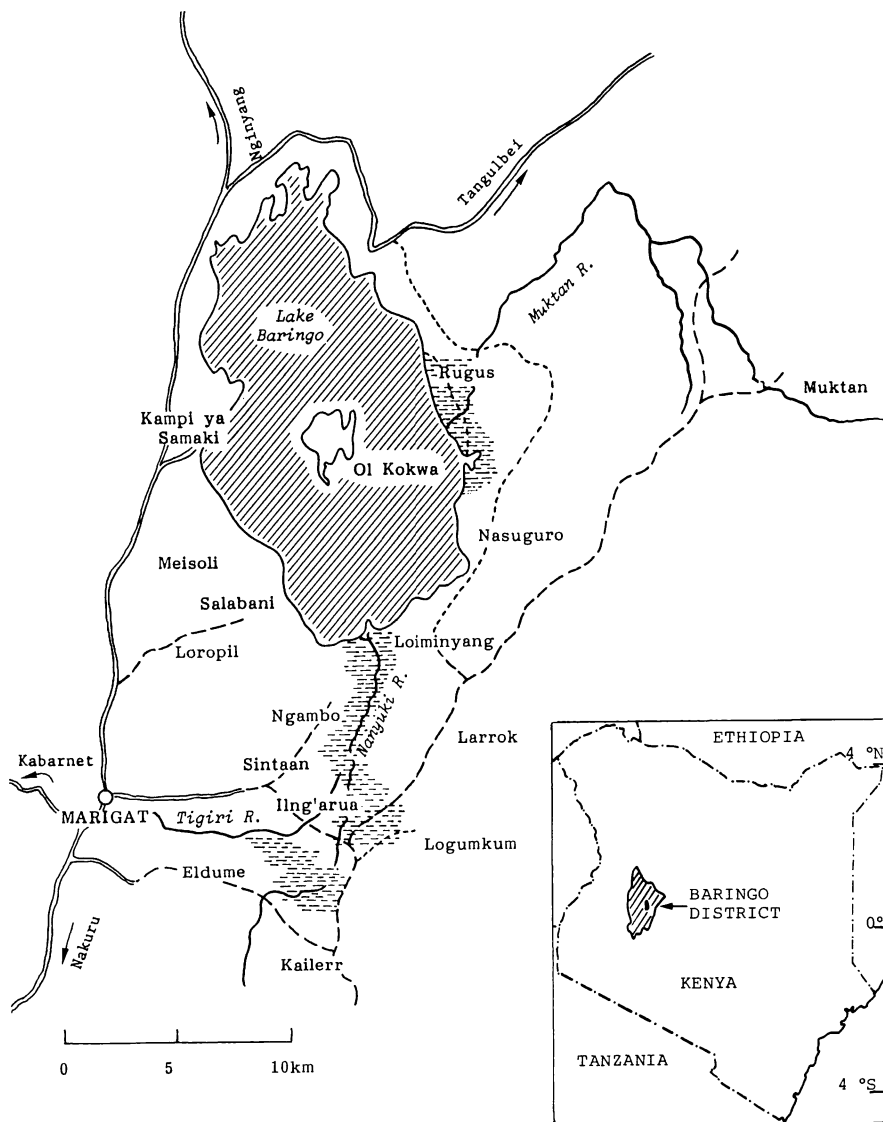


Fig. 1. Residential area of the Il-Chamus.

peoples, such as the Maasai, the Samburu, the Ndorobo, the Turkana, and some other Karenjin peoples mixed in this area (Anderson, 1981).

The Il-Chamus's habitat is semi-arid; the main vegetation is characterized by *Acacia* woodland and *Acacia* savanna, although seasonal swamps appear around Lake Baringo and between rivers. They raise cattle, goats and sheep, and cultivate irrigated or dry-land farms mainly to grow maize and finger millet. They also fish in the lake and rivers.

I conducted field research from August 1986 to January 1987, and from August 1988 to January 1989. I intensively studied the people around Logumkum (Fig. 1), whose lives depend on livestock raising and traditional irrigated agriculture.

## II. Homestead

The Il-Chamus call the space of residence as *nkang* (pl. *nkangitie*). Figure 2 shows a plan of a typical *nkang*. The fence (*wata*), which surrounds the *nkang*, is usually made with branches of such thorny trees as *Acacia* and *Commiphora* species. One or two huts (*nkaji*), a pen for cattle (*bonkicu*), a pen for small livestock (*sum*), and a sunshade for infants of domesticated animals (*lporoiet*) are built. The *nkang* has one gate (*ltim*), which is closed by a big thorny branch at night.

*Nkang* is a general term for such a visual minimum residential unit with several structures. *Nkang* also refers to the patrilineal group such as family, lineage, and clan. In this report, the minimum residential unit is referred to as homestead. Each homesteads located from 20 m to a few kilometers apart from the nearest one.

The Il-Chamus establish a new homestead when they marry, following a neo-local residential rule. The new homestead is called by the husband's name.

In principle, the homestead consists of the husband, his wife/wives and their unmarried children. However, its membership is unstable and flexible. For example,

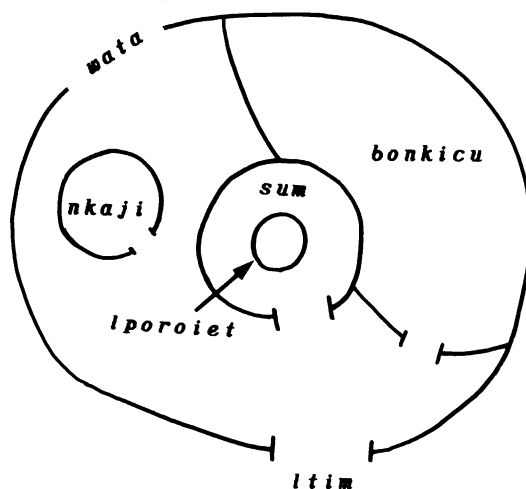


Fig. 2. Typical *nkang*.

widows or elder wives often set up their independent homesteads. Children of relatives and friends may come to stay, and unmarried children may leave their natal homestead and stay at another. Therefore, a homestead is a unit of production and consumption. The people who co-reside in a homestead carry out daily work in co-operation.

## MARRIAGE AND THE DIVISION OF LABOR BY GENDER

### I. Marriage and Inheritance of Property

There are several levels of patrilineal descent groups within the Il-Chamus society (Anderson, 1981). A person belongs to his/her father's group by birth. A married woman uses her husband's group name.

A marriage is legally approved through three processes: payment of the bridewealth from the groom to members of the bride's family, offering of a symbolic ornament from the groom to the bride's mother, and the wedding. There are many cases of polygynous marriage. Approximately, 23% of the married men have more than one wife. Although divorce is rare, it is permitted only before the wife gives birth.

A newly-wed couple needs property, such as livestock and farms to subsist on when they start a life together. The livestock property consists of two categories. One is the husband's own property which he accumulated before marriage, and the other is *balele-enkartet* (literally "livestock of stick") which the husband's relatives give to the wife when they marry. All the livestock are put together to make one herd, and this herd is called "[husband's name]'s livestock." The husband is entitled to make decisions about each livestock individual such as to loan, slaughter, sell and exchange them. Although they say that *balele-enkartet* is the wife's property, she cannot reject her husband's decision on her animals.

The husband, in general, transfers ownership of most of his livestock to his children and wife during his lifetime. However, he continues to make decisions on these livestock as long as they are kept in his homestead. Children inherit livestock from their father at 12–13 years of age. Sons get more animals than daughters. The sons, in the future, use the livestock as bridewealth, sacrifice for their rites of passage, food for their marriage ceremony, etc. The daughters cannot take their animals away with them as a dowry when they marry. They use them as a gift to their brother's wives: *balele-enkartet*.

In the study area, the Il-Chamus cultivate irrigated farms on the border of a swamp. There are three patterns to the inheritance of farms: (1) from father to son, (2) from mother to son, and (3) from husband to wife. Daughters cannot inherit farms from their parents. Thus unmarried women never have their own farms.

## II. The Division of Labor by Sex—Why a Husband Needs a Wife in Daily Life

There is a clear division of labor by gender in the homestead activities (Table 1).<sup>(1)</sup> A man, especially the husband, takes part in the temporary subsistence activity such as hunting. He can trust other persons with certain labor such as building huts, cutting and gathering materials for the homestead, slaughtering cattle, etc., in exchange for beer or money.

Every day, the husband goes out by himself for a long time, after his livestock go out to pasture. He spends the day staying and sleeping in the riverine forest, or visit-

**Table 1.** Age-sexual division of labor in daily activities.

Activity	Character of work	Engagement to work			
		Male		Female	
		U	M	U	M
Caring livestock	A		+		+
Herding cattle	A	+			
Collecting honey	B C D	+	+		
Fishing	B D	+	+		
Hunting	B D	+	+		
Exterminating baboons	B D	+			
Guarding field at night	B D	+			
Slaughtering cattle	B C D	*	+		
Constructing enclosure	B C	+	+		
Building the frame of hut	B C D	+	+		
Cutting and gathering materials for hut	B C D	+	+		
Milking	A D				+
Cooking	A D			*	+
Milling crop	A D				+
Processing milk	A D				+
Washing and fumigating vessels	A D				+
Sweeping	A				+
Drawing water	A D			*	+
Gathering firewood	A D			*	+
Washing clothes	A			*	+
Washing tablewares	A			*	+
Herding small livestock	A C	+		+	+
Working in field (harvest, sowing)	B D	*		*	+
Carrying crops	B C D			*	+
Gathering food plants	B D			*	+
Plastering walls hut	B D				+
Roofing hut	B D				+
Gathering materials for hut (in a short distance)	B C D				+
Sewing clothes	B D				+
Making tool (bed, vessel)	B D				+
Making beer	B C D				+
Shopping	B		+		+
Caring children	A D			*	+
Tanning	B D				+
Slaughtering small livestock	B	+	+		+
Milling tobacco	A		+		+
Gathering medical plants	B C	+	+		+
Sending livestock to herd	A		+		+

A: Daily activity; B: Temporary activity; C: Work entrusted to others; D: Age-sexually specialized work; U: unmarried; M: married, +: engaging; \*: assisted.

ing other homesteads. These activities of the husband play an important part in the homestead management, because this is how he collects information on subsistence activities, e.g., the condition of grasses for livestock, suitable harvest time, market condition of livestock, etc. He also participates in social events such as ceremonies, mediating troubles, exchanging livestock, etc.

In contrast, the wife is a harder worker. She does one chore after another all day long. Because these chores are basically private work, she does not have co-workers. She is specialized in the essential and basic house keeping work for the homestead members, such as washing, milking, fetching water, etc. Furthermore, women carry out most agricultural activities. Except for young husbands, married men rarely take part in agricultural activities.

Since most basic chores are conducted by the wife, the homestead members cannot maintain their daily life without her. For example, they cannot drink milk without her, because usually, only the wife milks cows. Furthermore, no one else washes and fumigates the vessel of milk, or carries water from the river to the homestead. Even if a man's widowed mother or sisters do these works, they are just a temporary relief. He needs his wife in the long run, because the mother would become frail and die before him, and sisters would marry out and leave their homestead sooner or later.

On the other hand, a wife does not always need a husband in daily life at the homestead. Even if they live separately, a wife can get her husband's support, such as the exchange of information.

## THE NECESSITY OF THE SPOUSE'S CO-RESIDENCE

### I. Wife's Separation from the Husband in Polygynous Families

The Il-Chamus say that a husband and his wife/wives should live together in the same homestead, whether monogamous or polygynous. However, among the 53 homesteads which I visited, there were several homesteads without the husband, although all homesteads had a married woman as a member. For example, a widow was living together with her unmarried children in one case. In another case, the husband was absent on temporary work in the city. In several cases, elder wives lived in homesteads different from their husbands' polygynous families. I call these wives as "separated wives" hereafter.

Residential separation between a husband and his wife in a polygynous family is not a divorce. In divorce, the relatives of the wife must pay back the bridewealth to her husband. The husband continues to be the pater of the children of his separated wife. His children conduct important rituals, such as initiation of boys, circumcision of both sexes, and weddings, in his homestead. A separated wife and her unmarried children continue to belong to the descent group of her husband.

Figure 3 shows residential separation of a polygynous family. I stayed in the third wife's homestead. This homestead was also without the husband. The members

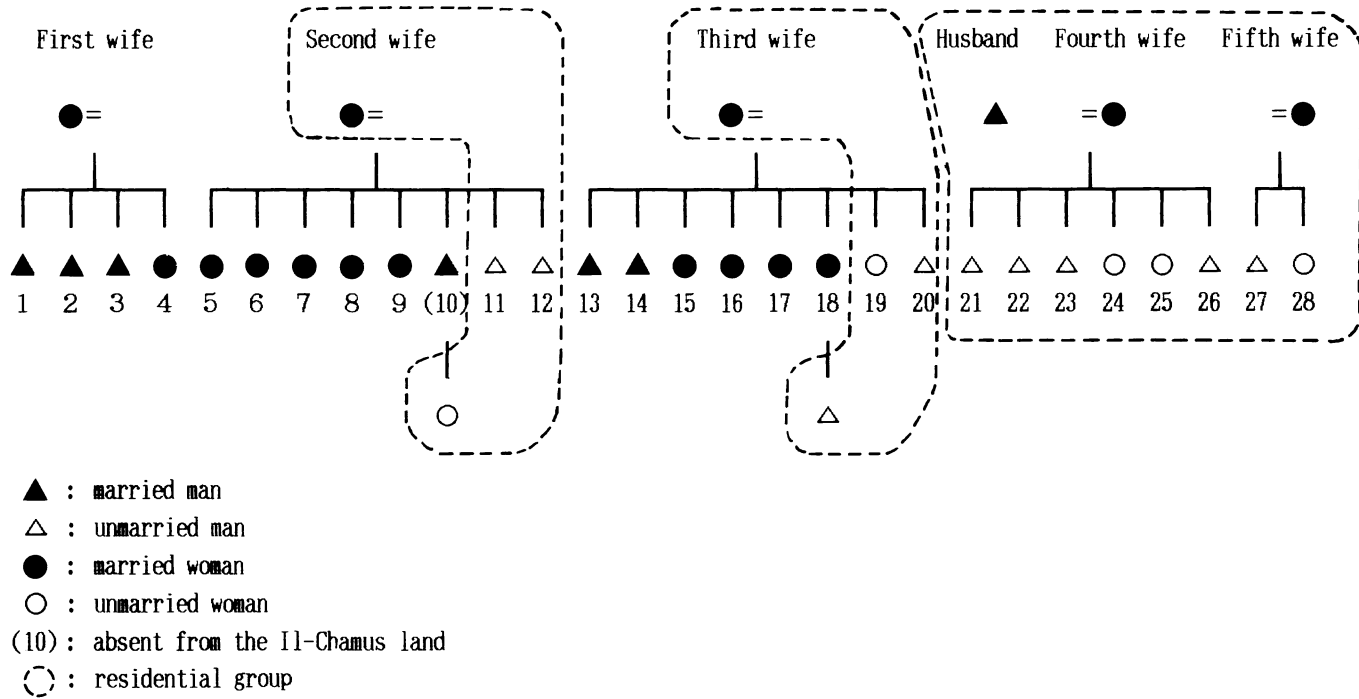


Fig. 3. The wives' residential separation from their husband in a polygynous family.



were the married woman, her unmarried sons (16 years old and 6 years old), and her unmarried daughter (20 years old). The married woman was the third wife of a man who married five wives (the first wife was dead). Her husband lived in another homestead with his fourth and fifth wives and their unmarried children. His second wife lived in a neighboring homestead together with her unmarried children and grandchildren.

Elder wives said that they left their husband's homestead after they became unable to give birth, around when their youngest child became 5–6 years old. They also said that at least one son had married when they left their husband's homestead. In contrast, wives who were considered to be still fertile stayed with their husband. In particular, the youngest wife would remain in the husband's homestead to the last.

There are several common elements in the separation of homesteads between a husband and his wife/wives: (1) The homestead of a separated wife is located a rather short distance from her husband's. It is usually built adjacent to the husband's. Such arrangements are unusual, because homesteads are widely distanced from one another. (2) Each separated wife lives in her own homestead independently, and co-wives never live together. Unmarried children never stay in their father's homestead if their mother leaves. (3) The homestead of a separated wife is called by her husband's name, and her husband plays the role of the head of her homestead in rituals. He visits his separated wife's homestead and stays for a long time every day, but he behaves as a visitor. He never stays overnight at the wife's homestead. (4) Once a wife leaves her husband's homestead, she never joins it again. (5) The homestead of a separated wife is economically independent from her husband's. She leaves the husband's homestead with her own livestock, e.g. *balele-enkartet*. Although her husband may give her some livestock, *balele-enkartet* is the main livestock to support her homestead's livelihood. After the separation of the homesteads, the husband cannot meddle in the affairs of the livestock of his separated wife's homestead. After the separation, the wife continues to cultivate farms given by her husband and the harvested crop is consumed among her homestead members.

The separation of polygynous wives is recognized as a common, customary process by the Il-Chamus. In other words, there is a potential of such a separation between a husband and his wife among the Il-Chamus. A wife may stay in her husband's homestead, if she wants. However, the husband cannot prevent his wife from leaving him, even if she is the most favorite wife (*kirotet*).

## II. The Widow and the Widower's Choice

After the death of a spouse, men and women behave differently. There were many widows, but I never met a widower who did not remarry in the Il-Chamus society. A widower who had only one wife will marry again and continue to keep his own homestead. Even a rather old man had a wife living with him. The Il-Chamus say that a man surviving his wife remarries as soon as possible, within a half year after

his wife's death. In contrast, a widow will choose between moving to somebody's homestead or setting up her own homestead. This difference arises from the fact that a husband needs a wife in daily life, while a wife can live without her husband.

A childless widow can return to her natal family. This leads to the nullification of the marriage and remarriage. Her relatives will pay back the bridewealth to the deceased husband's relatives. However, a widow with children is not allowed to remarry. If she is young, a man of the same age-set as her dead husband may be selected by the lineage members, and he would replace the dead husband economically and sexually. This replacement is called *lotinkaji*.

In the following case, young widows became independent and received *lotinkaji*.

A man had three wives who all lived in a homestead with their children. When he died in April 1986, all wives were still young. Each of them got a *lotinkaji*, but continued to live together in the dead husband's homestead for about one year. Then, in June 1988, each widow built her own homestead with her children. As they had inherited livestock and farm from their husband, they were able to manage their own homestead. One of the widows became pregnant, but she said that the genitor of the fetus was not the *lotinkaji* but a lover.

Thus, widows do not always depend on her *lotinkaji* economically. Elder widows are not given any *lotinkaji*. Widows have few troubles in their daily life without their husband as a representative.

A widow keeps the status of a wife of her dead husband throughout the rest of her life. Thus, the children she bears are recognized as her dead husband's, even if the genitor of the children may be a *lotinkaji* or her lover. *Lotinkaji* ought to support the widow and her children, but he has no right over her homestead and livestock. He cannot make any claims on the lives of the widow and her children. For example, *lotinkaji* can neither decide on the marriage of the widow's children, nor have any claim on the bridewealth of the widow's daughter.

A widow selects her residence according to her age, and to her economic and social conditions, e.g., the age and number of her children, whether her children are married or unmarried, how many livestock she has, etc. However, a widow never chooses to return to her natal homestead unless she divorces, live with the husband's parents and relatives, nor move to the homestead of her *lotinkaji*. Widow's choice on her residence can be grouped into three patterns: (1) residing in an independent homestead, alone, or with her unmarried children or grandchildren, (2) moving to her married son's homestead, and (3) moving to the homestead of her daughter's husband.

## ADULTERY AND THE LEGITIMACY OF CHILDREN—THE EFFORT OF HUSBANDS TO CONTROL THEIR WIVES

### I. Age Categories of Women

Women are categorized into three groups by age as follows: (1) *ntito*, uncircumcised girl, (2) *mambai*, circumcised woman who can give birth, and (3) *ndasat*, elder

woman who has reached menopause.

A *ntito* becomes *mambai* after circumcision. In the old days, circumcision was performed as a part of the marriage ceremony. A bride was circumcised a day before she moved to the bridegroom's homestead. In those days, becoming pregnant before circumcision was regarded (and is still regarded) as violation of "*ugoki*", translated as taboo. Abortion and infanticide were practiced to avoid resulting misfortunes. Nowadays, in order to prevent girls from becoming pregnant before they are circumcised, rite of circumcision is cut off from marriage. Girls are circumcised around 14–17 years old. There is no rite of passage from *mambai* to *ndasat*.

According to these categories, a women's proscribed behavior varies. A girl, *ntito*, may go dancing every night. But she must stop it once she is married. In general, a married *mambai* should devote herself to housekeeping and child-rearing in her homestead, and avoid going out or visiting others just for recreation. A *mambai* never goes out at night. If a ceremony has dancing at night, a married *mambai* never joins. Women explain that it is because most husbands restrict their wives from going out at night. In contrast, a *ndasat* often stays at other homesteads almost all day long. *Ndasats* are free from child-rearing, and some of them make the elder daughters replace the mother in the homestead chores. *Ndasats* drink beer together with men. Such behaviors are never allowed to *mambais*. In case of *ndasats*, neither their husbands nor other people blame them for such behaviors.

Thus, the behavior of a married *mambai* tends to be controlled and restricted by her husband. The husband is always nervous about his wives' behavior, especially when they are outside the homestead. For example, the husband not only scolds his wife but beats her severely and frantically if he feels that she returns unduly late from water drawing or stays too long in homesteads elsewhere. The husbands use personal violence as well as public force by the group to restrict and control their wives' behaviors. The following case was a punishment by all the members of an age-set (*Lkiapo*: men of 26–38 years old at that time) on all wives within the neighborhood.

In a series of three wedding ceremonies, wives actively joined the dance and tempted young men. The members of the *Lkiapo* age-set held many meetings to discuss the behaviors of their wives, individually and as a whole. They decided to build a *wata*, an enclosure made by branches of thorny trees, in the woodland. There, they planned to castigate all their wives.

The news rapidly spread among the wives of *Lkiapo* men. Some had not attended the weddings in question, but all wives could possibly be beaten. Some wives wanted to discuss the countermeasures for it. However, holding an open meeting was unrealistic, because, if the husbands found it, they were sure to be beaten hard. They were afraid to run away, because they would be beaten even more severely. Although the husbands detected the wives' agitation, they followed the scheduled course of building an enclosure in the woodland as planned, and holding a meeting to fix the date of the punishment. The wives had only two choices: to dare being beaten, or to try to beg for forgiveness by all means. They chose to apologize to their husbands for their behavior. They would make a lot of beer and dance with the husbands to make peace, and promise their husbands never to dance with *morani* (young men).

## II. Adultery by the Wife—Love Relationship

There are many folk tales that indicate a background for the husband's tendency to restrict his wife: he fears that his wife would commit adultery. One of the tales goes as follows.

A man took his wife along wherever he went. He would play *ntotoi*, a game played with stones usually under a tree or in the riverine forest by men, making his wife wait up in a tree. When the game was over, he took her down and went back to their homestead together. One day, they visited the wife's natal homestead. The wife said to her sister secretly, "Give my *lan'gata* (lover) a message, that he should wait at the top of the tree under which the men play *ntotoi*." On the next day as usual, she was brought to her husband favorite *ntotoi* place. She found her lover at the top of the tree, and had sexual intercourse with him. She became pregnant. Her husband had doubts about her pregnancy. He beat her severely with a stick and made her confess the truth.

Then he held a meeting. It was a big meeting with all the Il-Chamus men. "My wife is exceedingly dangerous. I cannot control her no matter how much I try to restrict and supervise her behavior," he said. One of the men retorted, "You don't know how to control a wife's behavior. But I can control it completely."

The latter of the two men married and had a second wife. He followed this wife everywhere, even when she went to fetch water from the river or gathered firewood in the woodland. They did not have a child for a long time, because he never slept with his wife. He did not even play *ntotoi*, to be always together with his second wife. She wanted a child. She said to the first wife, "Please give my lover a message that I want to meet him in the woodland tomorrow." The first wife sent her daughter as a messenger. On the next day, the husband went out to visit his brother's homestead taking his second wife along as usual. A short time after they passed a river, she complained that she felt sick. She vomited, had loose bowels, and looked like she would die. The husband ran and returned to the river to bring water. During the time, she met her lover hiding in the woodland, and had sexual intercourse with him. She became pregnant.

The husband was very surprised. He, too, held a meeting and said, "Wives are very dangerous. I can never control them by any means," he concluded. He could not understand how his second wife got pregnant. He had been ever cautious as to sweeping the ground in and around the hut inside the homestead every night to find any footprints.

There is a kind of love relationship called *lan'gata*. Although *lan'gata* originally means "friend" in general use, the term signifies a specific, stable, sexual relationship between the sexes. It excludes the relationship between spouses. It is when the woman becomes pregnant that a *lan'gata* relationship causes trouble. The man may be charged with adultery if he impregnated a woman married to someone else. In the case of an unmarried girl, he may be forced to marry her by her father.

Although such a relationship is not open, in most cases, people know it as a public secret through rumor or boastful talks. Even so, strangely enough, a husband is left in the dark about the *lan'gata* relationship between his wife and her lover.

A husband fears his wives' pregnancy resulting from adultery. Thus he worries, watches, and restricts her behavior. Among the Il-Chamus it is considered that adul-

tery is always caused by women, whether the relationship is a stable *lan'gata* or a temporary one. The husband does not take any action against a suspected adulterer. An adultery becomes apparent only when the wife becomes pregnant and her husband forces her to confess adultery.

An adultery is not settled privately between the adulterer and the husband. The elders hold a meeting for the settlement. The rules on adultery are as follows: (1) In the case that the adulterer belongs to the same age-set as the adulteress's husband, there is no penalty such as compensation. The elders reconcile the two men at the meeting and conduct some rituals. The adulterer is required only to hold a party to invite the elders and the husband. (2) In the case that the adulterer and the adulteress's husband belong to different age-sets, the adulterer must compensate for his violation and pays *nkicu mokoso* (literally "cattle for the trouble") to the husband. There are two types of *nkicu mokoso*: two nulliparous cows and a ox, or two parous cows and an infant of one of them.

Adultery is treated as a matter between the adulterer and the adulteress's husband, and the aim of the elders' mediation is to restore the relation between the two men. The adulteress is neither blamed publicly nor punished.

### III. The Husband's Attitude to Child Legitimacy

The social position of an adulterine child is decided by the adulteress's husband. He generally does not want the child to become his legitimate child. When the adulterine child is a boy, the husband is most likely to give the child to the natal family of his wife. Thus, the boy will be socially accepted as a child of his maternal grandparents. When the adulterine child is a girl, the husband's agnates persuade him to rear the girl as his legitimate child out of a realistic view that they will get some bridewealth in future. In many cases, husbands accept girls as their legitimate children.

The fact that the husbands do not always accept adulterine children as legitimate suggests that they discriminate keenly the biological genitor-child relationship from the socially legitimate pater-child relationship. When there is a disagreement between these two relationships, husbands are strongly reluctant to socially accept those children.

The Il-Chamus say that anyone can recognize the genitor of an adulterine child from appearance. They also say that it is hard for an adulterous wife to hide the truth from her husband when she gives birth.

An Il-Chamus husband seems to fear that the others doubt whether he is the genitor of the child. It is not only the husband who carefully observes the behavior of married *mambai*. The Il-Chamus frequently exchange rumors in daily conversation. This makes the husband try even harder to control his wife's behavior. Even if an adultery in reality had not been committed, a husband often reproaches his wife, that people suspect her of adultery. In short, the Il-Chamus do not have a system to admit children automatically into agnatic social structure, and as a result, always worry about the genitor of the children.

Although a husband is nervous about a *mambai* wife, he changes his attitude after she becomes a *ndasat*. He does not restrict her behavior. That a husband's attitude to his wives depends on their age is apparent in a polygynous family. I often observed that a husband denounced only the *mambai* wife and not the *ndasat* wives even when co-wives did virtually the same things.

On the other hand, women say that it is not a vice to have a specific lover, *lan'gata*, and that all women including married ones usually have *lan'gata*. Most women I met had *lan'gata* and did not hide it. The women themselves usually knew who was the *lan'gata* of one another. They often revealed to each other their "secret" rendezvous. However, the women have a negative opinion on prostitutes or women who have sexual intercourse with many men.

Women seem to be tolerant of their husbands' adultery with married women. They said lightly, "Our opinion about the *lan'gata* of the husband? It is only a matter in the bush, isn't it? We are his wives and stay in his homestead."

## DISCUSSION

### I. Subsistence Aspect of Marriage

In general, the economic bond formed by the division of labor by gender in daily life may strengthen the biological mating bond, making the relationship last longer. This may have played an important role in the formation of couples in the evolution of human society (Imanishi, 1961; Fisher, 1982).

Among the Il-Chamus, however, a husband depends one-sidedly on his wife for daily chores. On the other hand, a wife can "live" without her husband so long as she has the economic resources such as livestock and farms. However, a woman cannot get these resources without getting married. Therefore, the marriage, more than a husband, is important for a woman to survive.

As I have shown above, Il-Chamus men and women marry to set up their livelihood. But they supply each other on different levels: a husband gives his wife economic resources and the wife gives her husband labor. In the Il-Chamus society, the marriage initiates a legal relationship between the couple, and between them and their children. The legal relationship entails following rules which govern the transfer of property, such as inheritance livestock and farms, sharing bridewealth, etc. The relationship does not change even when a partner dies or decides to live separately. The wife's separation from her husband in a polygynous family becomes possible because the legal relationship is kept intact.

In a polygynous family, the reproductive function determines the co-residence of the husband and his wife. A wife may separate when she becomes too old to give birth. A husband needs at least one wife to co-reside in his homestead. However, there is no reason for all the wives to continue to co-reside with their husband. The youngest wife, who generally is reproductive longer, lives with the husband until he dies. Even after she is through with reproduction, she stays with the husband to take

care of housework as in the case of monogamous couples. The elder wives are liberated from the role of the housewife when they become no longer reproductive.

## II. Sexual and Reproductive Aspect of Marriage

One of the functions of marriage is to justify an exclusive sexual relationship between the sexes. This function gives a man the institutional assurance that the child born from his wife is his biological child. In this sense, marriage is a device to provide a child with the father (Ichikawa, 1983). Adultery is a serious violation of this function.

Among the Il-Chamus, the punishment against adultery ensures the husband's privilege through compensation. However, this rule applies only to men and aims to repair the bond among men. There are few institutional devices such as a set of punishments to stop women from committing adultery.

Among the Turkana in Kenya, it is believed that, when a wife commits adultery, not only herself but also her family members and relatives suffer from severe illness and often die (Gulliver, 1951). According to Islamic laws, a wife's adultery, real or suspected, is one of the most serious crimes, and is a reason for divorce (Wada, 1988).

In contrast, adultery does not arouse any religious dangers for those who commit the act among the Il-Chamus. Nor does it deprive women of economic advantage, since I did not hear of any Il-Chamus woman being divorced because of her adultery. Lack of institutional devices to prevent the wives' adultery might force an Il-Chamus husband to supervise wives' daily activity. By doing so, he is trying to ensure that the children born from his wives are his biological children. He is also keen to public rumor about who may have fathered his children.

Through the Il-Chamus marriage, a man receives his wife's labor for keeping his subsistence. He also gets legitimate children. However, he is compelled to watch constantly so that the wives do not commit adultery. In short, optimum results in his marriage is materialized only when he co-resides with his wife. On the other hand, marriage brings a woman property to live on and legitimate children. The wife's tolerance of her husband's adultery suggests that the above deal suits her also.

## NOTES

- (1) The children's labor is also important for the homestead management. They help the wife with her daily subsistence activities such as herding livestock, etc. Therefore, a couple without children rely on children from other homesteads, who stay and help their work.

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